

Michael Reedy acceptance speech for 2023 St. Thomas More Society Award

I am overwhelmed by this honor. I am also grateful, delighted, and humbled, especially to follow in the footsteps of Judge Manley, who has worked so hard to understand and help people living on the fringes of society, just as Jesus instructed.

I thank your Grace, Bishop Cantu, for presiding over this celebration. I thank Brian Doyle and the Board of the St. Thomas More Society in Santa Clara County for this recognition. I hope I prove myself worthy of it. I give thanks for my colleagues at McManis Faulkner, who are here tonight, as well as our son, Raymond; my much younger brother, Roger and his wife May; as well as other friends and family in attendance. The one benefit of COVID was learning to accept and love what we once took for granted – being with family and friends – that we now know with certainty to be one of the best parts of life.

My mother, Mary Kay Reedy, would have understood this award and been thrilled by it. She loved “A Man for All Seasons,” the 1966 film about St. Thomas More. The idea that you need to be true to yourself and to God was what my mother lived.

She loved God more than anyone I have ever known. When she was in hospice care, in 2010, she looked forward to being reunited with God. She told us she was going to do a big cannonball jump into God’s lap. I am sure she did. I feel my mother’s spirit here at the Santa Clara Mission. She loved the sunrise outdoor services they held on Easter Sunday. The glory of the rising sun on the day Jesus rose from the dead resonated with her.

When my mother was dying, each of her 8 children had extended private time with her. I said many rosaries with her and for her. I bought this wooden rosary from the gift shop at St. Joseph’s Basilica when my mother was receiving hospice care in 2010.

My mother chose to be cremated and gave us instructions on where she wanted her ashes spread. They included Carmel Beach and the ocean there, her parent’s grave in Chicago, and in the rose garden adjacent to the Santa Clara Mission. I think of her and pray for her whenever I come here.

I had a devoted Catholic upbringing. Both my parents came from large Irish Catholic families on the south side of Chicago. I received First Communion in 1962, during a Latin mass. I remember my first confession, and the incredible feeling that my soul had been cleansed.

I was an altar boy and a choir boy at the parish of Saint Francis Xavier in La Grange, Illinois, in the western suburbs of Chicago. My most vivid memory was a midnight mass on Christmas Eve, singing "O Holy Night" in a choir loft at the back of the church, wearing brown monk's robes and wooden rosaries, with the entire church lit only by candle lights on every pew. I remember the parishioners looking up at the choir loft and feeling like an angel.

I love the feeling of finding God in our every day lives. A morning sunrise, a visit to Yosemite, exploring a medieval cathedral, walking in a redwood grove. But even more, showing kindness to strangers, listening to someone who is struggling, offering hope to them.

To me, being a good lawyer means you are acting in service to God. You help people through a difficult time in their lives, you seek to provide justice, you try to find solutions to complex problems.

A courtroom is not unlike a church. A robed figure in an elevated position. People petitioning and offering prayers for relief. The benches in a courtroom can resemble pews in a church. The word of the judge and the higher courts becomes law.

We lawyers must strive to make this system better for the people who need it. My approach has been to treat family law issues as problem solving, not combat. Families going through divorce are wounded. Their finances are strapped because they now have two households, twice as many bills, children moving between houses. They have to make difficult decisions at a time when their emotions are vulnerable. How do you apportion financial resources so both sides of the family can heal? That is the challenge of family law.

If the lawyers work together to find answers, those families and their children will be much better served. I word hard to settle issues because I took a mediation class at the University of San Francisco Law School, taught by Jay Folberg, who was dean of the law school. He said mediation could change family law, and he was right.

I was fortunate to take a family law practice class with Justice Don King, co-author of the Rutter Group treatise. The class included students from USF, Hastings, and Golden Gate. Justice King walked us through every step of a divorce, until judgment.

Most important, I took a seminar taught by Justice Ming Chin before he was appointed to the California Supreme Court. We learned how to resolve legal issues, and the importance of listening to the parties and the judge. These teachers taught me how to help families survive a divorce.

I have benefitted from working with and getting to know exceptional lawyers and judges during my career. I have worked at only one law firm – McManis Faulkner – during my 31 years as an attorney. Jim McManis and Bill Faulkner have mentored, advised, and supported me the entire time.

I give thanks for working on a civil case early in my career, with David Bennion as opposing counsel. David and I became friends, and he sponsored me to join the American Inns of Court, through the Honorable William Ingram Inn in San Jose. The Inns of Court promote ethics, civility, and professionalism. I have belonged to this organization for over 20 years and was able to serve in a leadership position, to promote those values.

The highlights of my time at the Ingram Inn included a trip to the United States Supreme Court in 2017. Leaders of inns from across the country (there are more than 350 inns) are invited every year to attend a reception and elegant dinner in the halls of the Supreme Court. It was reaffirming to meet lawyers and judges from around the country who devote themselves to ethics and civility.

The second highlight was a program held here at Santa Clara to honor the legacy of Justice John Paul Stevens. Four people who worked with or clerked for Justice Stevens spoke about his ethics, his kindness, his dedication to the law. Justice Stevens is an example of the lawyer I strive to be. Before he became a justice, when he was still a Chicago lawyer, John Paul Stevens was the bridge partner of my godmother, Claire Shevlin, my father's older sister. I wear bow ties to honor both Justice Stevens and Archibald Cox, the first special prosecutor appointed to investigate the Watergate scandal.

I thank Justice Patricia Bamattre-Manoukian, a previous recipient of this award, who encouraged me to become a Board member at Saint Francis High School in Mountain View, where our three children attended. I served there for 6 years, inspired by the values and humanity of the Holy Cross Brothers who founded St. Francis (as well as the University of Notre Dame and many other schools around the world).

Meeting and spending time with the Holy Cross Brothers at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, was wonderful. The Brothers are so devoted to their mission. They taught me that the best way to lead is to serve the needs of your people. Their guidance helped the Board of Directors to provide structure and opportunity for the students at Saint Francis, and the people who teach them. Serving on that Board and helping others was joyful.

I offer special thanks to Father Tony Mancuso, a co-celebrant of tonight's mass and the chaplain at St. Francis. Fr. Tony stepped into the President's

position on an interim basis during my tenure on the Board. He always put the needs of the students first and kept us grounded in the Holy Cross values. As an example of things coming full circle, Deacon Richard Noack, who provided legal counsel while I was on the Board, is also celebrating tonight's mass.

My greatest thanks are to Barbara, my much better half. I became a lawyer because I fell in love with her and followed her when she moved to Washington, D.C. in 1986. I worked as a paralegal for a branch office of Pillsbury Madison & Sutro and decided to go to law school when my supervising partner, David Evans, told me I was practicing law without a license. He said I could make more money with a law license. He also told me about a program that our client, Chevron Corporation, offered their employees: they would reimburse 75% of your costs for classes related to the work you did at Chevron. Including law school. That conversation changed my life.

After Barbara and I married, I was hired directly by Chevron. The company moved us back to San Francisco and I worked full-time while going to law school at night. Our first two children were born during those four years, which I could not have survived without Barbara's love and support. I would work downtown from 7 am to 4 pm, come home for dinner, and go to class from 6 pm until 9 pm four days a week, for four years. Barbara made it all possible.

In closing, I want to acknowledge someone I have followed for many years, who seeks to serve and understand God: Paul Hewson, the lead singer and lyricist for U2, better known as Bono. Two weeks ago, I went to Las Vegas for the first time, to see U2 perform at a new state of the art stadium. It was an incredible show. During the performance, I noticed on the giant dome screen above and around the stage that Bono was wearing a brown wooden rosary. He never called attention to it, but it was there.

One of his lyrics during the show struck me deep. In the song "One," Bono sings: *Love is the temple, love the higher law*. I heard those words in a different way that night. They are both spiritual and practical, telling us how to build our beliefs ("love is the temple") and what should guide us ("love the higher law"). It applies to the practice of law, the way we worship, and the way we live.

Jesus taught us, "*Love one another as I have loved you.*" In Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 12-13, St. Paul addressed the importance of love: "*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*"

My enduring hope is that love will be our higher law. Thank you.